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Political Economy, Civic Virtue, and the Subjective World of the Elite, 1780–1825

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It is well known that economic thinking became fashionable in the second half of the eighteenth century in Russia.¹ The Free Economic Society, founded in 1765, put the issue of agricultural improvement on the agenda, conducted several international essay competitions, and published proposals based on different economic theories in its journal.² Middle-ranking landowners such as P. I. Rychkov and A. T. Bolotov wrote extensively on agricultural matters, both from agronomical and economic standpoints, and published their observations in periodicals. Some elite landowners experimented with various agronomical techniques, for example field rotations, and employed foreign bailiffs to supervise the implementation of imported techniques.³ They also wrote about their alleged successes (or failures), and a famous debate erupted between F. V. Rostopchin and E. R. Dashkova on the import of new English practices and technologies.⁴

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¹See Esther Kingston-Mann, “In the Light and Shadow of the West: The Impact of Western Economics in Pre-Emancipation Russia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33 (January 1991): 86–105; as well as Alessandro Stanziani, *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 2014), 23–31.

²*Trudy Vol'nogo ekonomicheskogo obshchestva*, 52 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1765–98). The edition continued in the nineteenth century. For an analysis of the society see Colum Leckey, *Patrons of Enlightenment: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Newark, 2011).

³Michael Confino, *Systèmes agraires et progrès agricole: L'assolement triennal en Russie aux XVIIIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris, 1969); idem, *Domaines et seigneurs en Russie vers la fin du XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1963). See also V. I. Semevskii, *Krest'ianskii vopros v Rossii v XVIII i pervoi polovine XIX veka* (St. Petersburg, 1888).

⁴[F. V. Rostopchin], *Plug i sokha, pisannoe stepnym dvorianinom* (Moscow, 1806); E. R. Dashkova, *Mnenie o pluge i sokhe* (St. Petersburg, 1807).

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The debate extended beyond agricultural improvement. Physiocratic ideas entered Russia through the offices of D. A. Golitsyn, who was the Russian plenipotentiary in Paris in the 1760s. He had come into contact with the French “économistes” and advocated their ideas in his letters to the vice-chancellor A. M. Golitsyn, which were read by Catherine II.⁵ Some of Adam Smith’s ideas were disseminated at Moscow University in the lectures of I. A. Tret’iakov and S. E. Denitskii, who had studied at the University of Glasgow in the 1760s and attended Adam Smith’s lectures.⁶ One often forgets, however, that one of the most articulate transmissions of liberal economic views, as opposed to mercantilism, occurred on the pages of N. I. Novikov’s *Pribavleniia k Moskovskim vedomostiam* (1783–84), which was distributed to the subscribers of the Moscow newspaper. In it, among other economic works, Novikov published a treatise known as “O torgovle voobshche,” which had long been attributed to him, but was recently revealed to be a translation of K. A. Schönfeld’s *Essay on the Beneficial Impact of Trade on the State* (1779).⁷ This ringing endorsement of freeing domestic and international trade cites David Hume, Adam Smith, Raynal, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and many others. It foregrounds such basic ideas as the division of labor; the economic stimulus created by new demands arising from the spread of fine taste and a degree of luxury; the advantages of paper money and the need for available credit; the moral transformation of citizens and rise of industriousness from participation in economic exchange; the innovative offshoots of the pursuit of self-interest; the importance of competition between citizens; the notion that, left alone, the economic system drives toward a point of equilibrium between supply and demand through inflation (although it does not refer explicitly to Smith’s famous notion of the “invisible hand” of the market); and the call to reinvest capital into production. This pamphlet also argues that despotic countries are the least—and republics the most—amenable to the development of trade and hence to the increase in wealth attendant on it.⁸ There is even a hint, in Novikov’s publication, that the net result of trade is an enhancement of freedom.⁹

⁵Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (RGADA), f. 1263 (Golitsynskii fond), op. 1, dd. 1111–25. Golitsyn’s *De l’esprit des économistes*, written and published after the French Revolution, reflects a more moderate version of physiocratic ideas. See D. A. Golitsyn, *De l’esprit des économistes ou les économistes justifiés d’avoir posé par leurs principes les bases de la révolution française* (Brunswick, 1796).

⁶Anrep Anikin, *Russian Thinkers: Essays on Socio-Economic Thought in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Moscow, 1988), 40–52.

⁷The translation of Schönfeld’s *Probschrift von dem vorteilhaften Einfluss der Handlung auf einen Staat* was republished in N. I. Novikov, *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1954), 507–61. Source identification by V. I. Simankov, *Iz rasyskanii o zhurnale Pribavleniia k Moskovskim vedomostiam (1784–4), ili ob avtorstve sochinenii, pripisyvavshikh N. I. Novikovu, I. G. Shvartsu i F. V. Karzhavinu* (Khar’kov, 2010), available at http://www.imwerden.de/pdf/simankov_o_zhurnale_pribavleniia_1783-84_2010.pdf. Unless otherwise noted, all URLs cited in this article were last accessed September 2, 2017. For a discussion of this edition see A. A. Kostin, “Divnyi novyi tsifrovoy mir, ili ob istochnikakh ‘Pribavleniia k Moskovskim vedomostiam,’” *Russkaia literatura* (2011): 1, 75–94.

⁸Novikov, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, 536.

⁹*Ibid.*, 535. Although it is mentioned at the beginning of part 3, Novikov in fact omitted the last chapter of the essay, devoted to freedom. In it, the author argued that the blossoming of trade is necessarily tied to direct and unfettered peasant ownership of the land, the absence of monopolies, personal security and security of property, freedom of conscience, and a republican form of government. The original is available at http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/img/?PID=PPN657496510|LOG_0001&physid=PHYS_0002.

The government took a great interest in economic matters. In its early years, Catherine adopted some physiocratic principles in economic policy, fostering competition, destroying monopolies, and adopting a flexible and moderately protectionist customs tariff in 1766. An even more liberal tariff was introduced in 1782. The *Nakaz* also incorporated some physiocratic ideas, notably the emphasis on private property, and struck a middle ground between freedom of trade and tariffs. (More protectionist policies returned later in her reign, in 1793.¹⁰) In 1768, Catherine mandated the Academy of Sciences to organize several expeditions to take stock of “what can contribute to the prosperity of the empire.”¹¹ She was particularly interested in the physical and economic geography of her dominions; that is, in everything that concerns natural resources, agronomic practices, and industry. The expedition headed by Peter Simon Pallas became the most famous, but it was by no means the only one. In 1775, Catherine granted all classes including serfs the freedom to manufacture, which greatly stimulated production.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, liberal economics of a Smithian persuasion was widely popular in the tsarist family and in government circles.¹² Some of Alexander I’s initial advisors, such as Admiral N. S. Mordvinov and V. P. Kochubei, were under Smith’s direct influence. The first Russian translation of the *Wealth of Nations*, commissioned by Minister of Finance A. I. Vasil’ev, was published between 1802 and 1806. Political economy was also present in educational institutions. The Riga-born and German-educated economist Heinrich Storch taught first at the Cadet Corps School in St. Petersburg, before becoming member and eventually vice-president of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. He wrote a comprehensive economic analysis of the Russian Empire in the 1790s and went on to publish a major treatise on political economy, acknowledged internationally, which was influenced by Adam Smith, but proposed an alternative, broader definition of wealth.¹³

This brief survey only skims the surface. Around the turn of the century the economic literature published in Russia was both substantial and current, if not necessarily original. Of course, local social and legal parameters sometimes compelled changes to the meaning of imported works. Thus in his preface, the translator of a text known in English as *The Rural Socrates* by Hans Kaspar Hirzel—a tribute to a Swiss peasant praised for his independence, self-discipline, rationality and obedience—enjoined Russian *noblemen* to take example from this starkly rigorist paragon of human perfectibility, lest the reader think this role model applied to serfs and implicitly argued for their emancipation.¹⁴ Nevertheless,

¹⁰Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, 1981), 470–75; V. V. Sviatlovskii, *Ocherki po istorii ekonomicheskikh vozzrenii na zapade i v Rossii*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1913), 217–22.

¹¹Peter Simon Pallas, *Voyages de M. P. S. Pallas en différentes provinces de l’empire de Russie, et dans l’Asie septentrionale*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1788), 1:iii.

¹²I. G. Blumin, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi mysli v Rossii v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1940), 50.

¹³H. F. Storch, *Historisch-statistische Gemälde des russischen Reichs am Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vols. 1–8 (Riga-Leipzig, 1797–1803); Heinrich Storch, *Cours d’économie politique ou exposition des principes qui déterminent la prospérité des nations* (St. Petersburg, 1815).

¹⁴I. K. Girtsel, *Sel'skoi Sokrat, ili opisanie ekonomicheskikh i npravstvennykh pravil zhizni filosafo-zemledel'tsa* (Moscow, 1789), 15. The original publication came out in German under the title *Die Wirthschaft eines philosophischen Bauers* (Zurich, 1761) and was translated into French in 1762 as *Le Socrate rustique*. The Russian translator, who developed a largely physiocratic argument, here writes about the “search for the true

Russia shared in the explosion of political economic literature, which John Shovlin observed in France and analyzed as a patriotic endeavor to “create a political community in which citizens subordinated their private interests to the welfare of the public.”¹⁵

The question I wish to pose here, is whether in Russia, too, the rise of economic thinking fostered a spirit of civic virtue, including an identification with interests of state that transcended self-interest, and if, as Shovlin identifies in France, this went so far as to be associated with republican ideas or some other notions of freedom. While the influence of the new political economy in government and academic circles is well documented, little has been said on the broader impact of political economy on the nobility, especially the upper nobility, which after all assumed important economic functions through the management of its estates. In his magisterial analysis of the economic practices of the nobility, Michael Confino concluded that nobles and serfs by and large shared a mentality of internalized traditionalism, rooted in structures of ownership and agronomical realities, that made them suspicious of innovation.¹⁶ What Confino called a “marvellous interlocking” of estate economy, rural society, and agricultural methods explains, in his account, why any incremental change would have called into question the entire edifice of social relations in imperial Russia and hence encountered considerable resistance.¹⁷ Confino’s premise that nobles were inspired solely by a self-interested desire to increase revenue from their estates was called into question by Elgar Melton, who demonstrated that “enlightened seigniors” equally cared about the moral and economic well-being of their serfs, and indeed thought that only by promoting the latter’s welfare could they hope to increase their own revenue. In the instructions they wrote to regulate the management of their estates, enlightened seigniors sought to establish a law-based system that would make the exercise of arbitrary authority unnecessary, which allowed them to pursue their economic interest with a clear conscience. Their *modus operandi* was thus juridical more than economic, perhaps reflecting cameralist ideas about a well-regulated system of government. Tracy Dennison recently demonstrated that the Sheremetevs granted considerable economic independence to their serfs, as well as title to the land they tilled, although their system, too, was a legal-administrative one and it is unclear what economic vision, if any, lay behind it.¹⁸ The question thus remains whether the new economic theory likewise influenced the worldview and practices of estate landowners.

By way of answering this question, I propose a close analysis of three case studies, consisting of two members of the elite, Princess Natal’ia Petrovna Golitsyna and Prince Ivan Ivanovich Bariatskii, and a member of the middling nobility, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Bakunin.¹⁹ My inclusion of Golitsyna is partly inspired by Michelle Marrese’s convincing

principles of public economy” (*obshchestvennaia ekonomia*) and draws attention to the tight similarities between the domestic economy and the government, so that Kliog (the idyllic Swiss peasant) is also presented as a model for the ruler (Girtsel, *Sel'skoi Sokrat*, 18).

¹⁵John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue* (Ithaca, 2006), 5.

¹⁶Confino, *Systèmes*, 253–69.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁸Tracy Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, England, 2011).

¹⁹This choice of figures has been dictated by the availability of archival records shedding light on their subjective world, but it does not imply that this trio is exceptional or unique in their involvement with political economy.

argument that it was often women who managed the estates they owned themselves or on behalf of their husbands.²⁰ I define “political economy” broadly as concern with and knowledge about the distribution and enhancement of wealth in the state (or in the realm of a ruler). Political economy is thus distinct from domestic economy, although in the case of Russian serf-owning nobles, especially those commanding vast country estates, the distinction begins to blur. Nevertheless, the use of “political economy” serves to focus attention on the tight interconnection between economic practices and issues of government. It also offers an alternative to the focus in recent scholarly work on the country estate as a privileged site for the invention of a new domesticity.²¹ My purpose is thus first to evaluate the extent to which my three protagonists had assimilated new economic thought from the Physiocrats to Adam Smith and what strand of economics they adopted; and, second, to probe how (if at all) this economic thinking affected their worldview, feelings, values, and behavior, in particular whether it shore up a sense of patriotic devotion to the well-being of the state; that is, inspired a public commitment over and above their private interests as landowners, in line with what Shovlin identified in prerevolutionary France.

A brief terminological note at the outset. The Russian language enjoyed the availability of at least four terms for economic matters, *domovodstvo*, *domostroitel'stvo*, *khoziaistvo*, and *ekonomiia*, the first two being calques of the Greek etymology of *economy* (“oikos”—house, and “nemein”—management). Generally, *domovodstvo* and *domostroitel'stvo* were more frequently used for the domestic or the estate economy (*sel'skoe domostroitel'stvo*), while *ekonomiia* was more likely to apply to broader public matters and *khoziaistvo* could apply to both. Novikov used the concept of state economy (“gosudarstvennaia ekonomiia”) in the 1783 translation “O torgovle voobzhshe” and so did I. I. Golikov in his biography of Peter I in 1788. The concept of *politicheskaia ekonomiia* itself is not attested until the beginning of the nineteenth century—the admittedly incomplete *Natsional'nyi korpus russkogo iazyka* lists Pushkin's *Roman v pis'makh* (1829) as the first occurrence—but that clearly does not mean that concerns now associated with the term “political economy” were absent before.

N. P. GOLITSYNA, who is known as the prototype of Pushkin's “Queen of Spades,” is the author of *Dnevnik moikh putesthestvii*, a diary of her travel and stay abroad during the years 1783–90, in which she demonstrates sustained interest in matters of political economy.²² Born in 1744 in Berlin, the daughter of Petr Grigor'evich Chernyshev, a diplomat and then senator, she spent much of her childhood in London and then Paris. In 1766 she married

²⁰Michelle Lamarche Marrese, *A Woman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700–1861* (Ithaca, 2002), 171–204.

²¹See, in particular, John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca, 2007), 48–81, for an excellent analysis of Bakunin's intentions from the perspective of self-invention and the fashioning of domesticity. For similar approaches to a somewhat later period see Mary W. Cavender, *Nests of the Gentry: Family, Estate, and Local Loyalties in Provincial Russia* (Newark, 2007); and Katherine Pickering Antonova, *An Ordinary Marriage: The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia* (New York, 2013).

²²Pushkin broadly based the character of the “Queen of Spades” on Golitsyna, but many of the key details of the story are fictional. See V. A. Mil'china, “Zapiski ‘pikovoi damy,’” *Vremennik pushkinskoi komissii*, vol. 22 (Leningrad, 1988), 136–42.

the wealthy Vladimir Borisovich Golitsyn, who retired from the army three years later with the rank of brigadier, by no means a distinguished achievement for a man of his social background. She took matters in her own hands, managing the family estates and overseeing the education of her children. She traveled abroad to supervise the education of her two sons in Strasbourg. Her two daughters followed along. When Catherine expressed displeasure at Golitsyna's decision to educate her children in foreign lands, she claimed that her husband's ill health required a stay abroad.²³

Her travel notes, *Observations from My Travels, 1783–1790*, written in lively French albeit with deficient spelling, begin by relating the transformations she undertook in her family estate of Kamarich in the Orlov province prior to departure. Dissatisfied with the peasant dwellings on this estate, both aesthetically and on pragmatic grounds (the fire risk), she ordered the village rebuilt along a straight line, spacing out houses and taking down fences on the roadside.²⁴ She named the two main streets after the owners and also arranged to lay out two decorative groves and build a stone church. These actions evince both rationalizing and aesthetic aspirations and are characteristic of her energetic management style. In an autobiographical account of her early life entitled *Observations on the Events of My Life*, Golitsyna recounted two more instances in which she oversaw the reconstruction of villages for her serfs. She claimed to erect beautiful houses both for her peasants' commodity and "for the arrangement of my view." The attempt to incorporate serf villages into the aesthetic amenities of the estate was unusual for the times, as expenses were more frequently funneled into improving the mansion and the gardens. Lest the readers think that she abused the manpower of her serfs, Golitsyna clarified that "I am running the constructions at my own costs, so that my peasants would not feel any burden from the move to a new place and would not complain that I initiated expenses that will wear them down."²⁵ The dispositions she took in Kamarich also featured the construction of a large mill and a distillery, suggesting that she intended to use serf labor to produce and trade alcohol, a brisk source of income for enterprising nobles as well as a cause of much serf exploitation.²⁶ Having put her house in order, she embarked on her journey "with tears in her eyes."

As she travels through the Polish steppes, she comments on the poverty of peasants, whom she considers to be much worse off than Russian serfs, and it is clear that she writes as a Russian patriot. In the parts of Poland then under Austrian control, she comments on the tyrannical rule of Joseph II, who has no compunction to expropriate noblemen when he

²³Stefan Lehr, "Vospitanie rossiiskogo dvorianstva: ot praktiki obrazovatel'nykh puteshestvii v zapadnuui Evropu k natsional'nym korniām kul'tury (semeistva Golitsynykh i Apraksinykh v 1780–1812)," *Quaestio Rossica* 2 (2015): 160; E. P. Grechanaia, *Kogda Rossiia govorila po-frantsuzskii: Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke (XVIII–pervaia polovina XIX veka)* (Moscow, 2010), 158–59.

²⁴N. P. Golitsyna, *Remarques sur mes voyages, 1783–1790*, Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, Otdel rukopisei (RGB), f. 64 (Viazemy), karton 113, d. 1, l. 4. A Russian translation of her diaries has appeared recently, but as it contains several translation mistakes, I will refer instead to the archival original. See N. P. Golitsyna, *Moia sud'ba—eto ia*, ed. and trans. T. P. Peters (Moscow, 2010). Translations into English are mine throughout. All dates are given in the old style.

²⁵N. P. Golitsyna, *Remarques sur des événements de ma vie*, RGB, f. 64, karton 117, d. 1, l. 23ob. Also in Golitsyna, *Moia sud'ba*, 31–88 (quotation on p. 58). For a discussion of Golitsyna's writings and of her stay in Paris see Grechanaia, *Kogda Rossiia govorila po-frantsuzskii*, 149–62.

²⁶Golitsyna, *Remarques sur des événements de ma vie*, l. 36.

wishes to acquire their castles.²⁷ Poles complain bitterly about the high levels of taxation, but she also observes that serfs are happy with their new ruler: “They have much more freedom than previously and they have the permission to complain against their lords if they are overburdened with work and he [the emperor] has emancipated them almost completely from their masters.”²⁸ She observes that starting from Leopold, the then capital of Galicia (now the Ukrainian city of Lviv), peasants “look completely different, [they are] more opulent and less exhausted with work.”²⁹ Although she generally feels corporatist solidarity with the Polish nobility and seems to regret the partition of Poland, she cannot help observe that peasants benefit from the policies of Joseph II. Generally, as she travels through Austria and then German principalities toward Strasburg, she draws a direct relationship between the well-being of peasants and the policies of their rulers or masters. Closer to Strasbourg she writes, “One sees a visible change in the well-being of the peasants, so this Prince is adored by his subjects. He seeks every means, even to his own detriment, to do them good. The peasants are industrious and good cultivators, even though their land is not the best, but they know how to take advantage of it.”³⁰ The link she draws here between wise management and the work ethic of the peasantry implies that it is the responsibility of the ruler to design incentives to encourage industriousness. She demonstrates interest in agricultural techniques, describing in detail how clover is sown to improve the fertility of the soil, for example. She seems critical of excessive taxes imposed on the population. She imputes the poverty in Southern Alsace to the heavy levies exacted by the King of France and bemoans the resulting mendicity, which contrasts starkly with the general opulence on the other side of the border, in the Swiss canton of Basel.³¹ The contrast between the two sides of a political border, as well as that between wild nature and the politeness of the people in the Berner Oberland, lead her to the realization that the economic situation and moral constitution of the people are not determined by nature, but by political and religious structures. She repeatedly highlights the fact that Reformed cantons in Switzerland are wealthier than Catholic ones, which she blames not only on the survival of superstitions, but also on the high number of religious festivities and processions, which “make people lazy,” and on the economic cost of maintaining monasteries, churches, and priests, siphoning resources away from the people.³² She could have found backing for these ideas in the *Wealth of Nations*, but here they seem to derive from personal observation.

Golitsyna’s benevolent attention to the lot of peasants does not mean that she supports bestowing political rights on the lower classes; indeed, she draws a sharply critical portrait of direct democracy in central Switzerland. Nothing could be more chaotic and detrimental

²⁷Golitsyna, *Remarques sur mes voyages*, I. 7ob.

²⁸Ibid., I. 11. Inspired by physiocratic principles, Joseph II undertook a series of reforms to put peasants on a more independent and prosperous footing, first empowering them to complain about abuse on the part of their lords, and then abolishing the *Leibeigenschaft* entirely, while forcing nobles to sell peasants’ holdings to them, if they so wished. In Galicia, the *Leibeigenschaft* was abolished in 1782. Joseph subsequently attempted to abolish the peasant’s obligation to work three days on behalf of his lord (the *robot*). See Derek Beales, *Joseph II, vol. 2, Against the World, 1780–1790* (Cambridge, England, 2009), 251–59.

²⁹Golitsyna, *Remarques sur mes voyages*, I. 12.

³⁰Ibid., I. 30ob.

³¹Ibid., I. 39.

³²Ibid., I. 54.

than the elections of officials, she maintains, as “these limited people, being unable to discern their true well-being ... do all they can to make the nobility feel their power to enact their fantasies to the point of insulting them after having chosen them as rulers.” Her patriarchal mindset comes across clearly in the description of Catholic peasants, who lack the education requisite to govern themselves in an ordered and reasoned fashion and instead succumb to class antagonism, being “impoverished due to the poor use they make of their freedom.” Yet she discovers a completely different situation in Protestant Zurich, where social harmony reigns due to sumptuary laws and the public commitment to education for all.³³ Her account of the first months of the French Revolution is likewise differentiated. On the one hand, she shuns the street mobs and stays inside for “fear of encountering this populace,” yet while attending the opening of the Estates-General on May 5, 1789, she wishes the representatives would strike an agreement “given the total crumbling of finances and of affairs generally.”³⁴ While she condemns street violence unequivocally, she is also unsparing toward the failures of government.

Golitsyna reveals herself to be an observant and concerned person, capable of extending sympathy to people in need, while also firmly keeping an eye on her own interests. Her stance is not always consistent and her judgments are often driven by circumstances and by the company she keeps. While she sympathizes with the Polish *szlachta*, which feels threatened by the policies of Joseph II, she succumbs to the unprepossessing charm of the Austrian emperor when she meets him. And similarly, in every country she visits, from Belgium to England, regardless of what she thinks of public affairs, she is highly partial to marks of attention the local rulers dispense on her, exemplifying her moral dependence on signs of monarchic favor. Upon return to Russia, she seeks to convert the foreign education of her children and her ties with foreign monarchs and aristocrats into a currency that enables access, prestige, and high rank in Russia.³⁵ Thus she expertly plays the game of patronage at court, being all the more determined that she could not rely on her husband to secure a good position for their children.³⁶

Yet throughout her journey, she displays sustained attention to political structures and matters of public policy. She passes judgment on the government of a ruler on the basis of the well-being of his subjects, including the peasants. She demonstrates particular interest in matters of taxation, calling for lower levies on both nobles and peasants. She firmly holds that the nobility should enjoy inalienable rights to property. Although she implies that serfdom is in itself acceptable, lauding the material condition of Russian serfs, she is harshly critical of landlords who drive their peasants to destitution. She also has an eye for the importance of expenditure to stimulate local economies. She notes that the austerity of the Austrian court and army leaves Galicia dependent on the circulation of Russian rubles

³³Ibid., II. 54–56ob.

³⁴Ibid., II. 89–90.

³⁵F. F. Vigel' commented caustically that “I found out, by the way, that a distinguished family and brilliant connections not only replace merit and rank ... but stand on a height inaccessible to the latter. This faith ... was directly imported from state councilor Princess Natal'ia Petrovna Golitsyna's suburban residence in St Germain.” See F. F. Vigel', *Zapiski* (Moscow, 2000), 49.

³⁶Golitsyna was awarded various orders, which allowed her to overcome the low rank of her deceased husband. See T. P. Peters, *Znakom'tes': Kniaz'ia Golitsyny* (Moscow, 2006), 9–13.

left over from the times of the Russian occupation.³⁷ And in Munich she notes general discontent with the rule of the Elector (Charles Theodore), who spends elsewhere the taxes he levies from the local population, thus throwing Bavaria into despondent poverty.³⁸ Finally, she is a perceptive observer of tensions between social estates and praises political systems in which social disparities are minimized as a result of public policies, notably in Swiss Protestant cantons, where she notes with much surprise, but overall praise, that merchants and artisans assume political functions.³⁹

Although her calls for lower taxation and against economically unproductive expenditure would have found Smith's favor, there is no unequivocal evidence in Golitsyna's diaries that she read Smith or any other works of political economy. And indeed, her idea that court expenditure is important to sustain the economic livelihood of a country would have earned the scorn of the Scottish economist. Despite her economic interests, she does not refer to any political or economic thinker, nor does she indicate that she was reading at all. Tellingly, when in 1803 she was thinking of ways to improve the yield of her estates, she turned for advice to D. M. Poltoratskii, a well-known agricultural "improver," instead of drawing on the by then voluminous literature on agricultural reform.⁴⁰ She relied more on elite networks than on theoretical literature. It is rather her experience managing her estates in the years prior to her departure that prompted her attention to such issues. It would thus be futile to seek for specific sources for her ideas. What is unusual about her is less the positions she advocates than the fact that they emerge from practical involvement with estate management and personal comparative observation, rather than from engagement with economic literature. Broadly speaking, she remains committed to the patriarchal notion that people in positions of authority, from rulers to landlords, steer the economy in their dominion, while assuming a duty of care toward their subjects. In her political imaginary, everything in the life of a serf or peasant depends on the wisdom and benevolence of their ruler. She does not question their dependency, nor does she envision the possibility, for example, that peasants could supplement their income as artisans or traders. It is incumbent on the landlord to introduce new agricultural techniques and to incentivize the work of peasants. Yet she also condones efforts to make dependent people somewhat more self-reliant by improving their education. In short, to judge on the basis of her diaries, she seems to take the duty of care of the landlord seriously, in keeping with Melton's description of "enlightened seigniors," while imagining that landowners thereby discharge a patriotic, public function.

Upon her return to Russia, Golitsyna continued energetically to manage her estates. She turned the estate of Gorodnia close to Kaluga into a delightful summer residence, including a beautiful English park with a pond and greenhouses, and a stately neo-classical mansion and wings designed by the architect Andrei Voronikhin, A. S. Stroganov's former

³⁷Golitsyna, *Remarques sur mes voyages*, I. 10ob.

³⁸Ibid., I. 28ob.

³⁹Ibid., I. 44.

⁴⁰Poltoratskii told her that no reform would come close to generating the revenue she gets from her distilleries. See B. A. Shlikhter and K. A. Maikova, "Arkhib imeniia Viazemy," *Zapiski otdela rukopisei Gos. biblioteka SSSR. im. V. I. Lenina*, vol. 17 (Moscow, 1955), 35.

serf.⁴¹ She also continued to develop her lands at Kamarich, in particular the estate of Radogoshch' in Orlov province, where she similarly developed a garden and even drafted serfs from other villages to help build stone buildings.

In January 1797, Golitsyna's serfs at Radogoshch' rebelled against their bailiff, Semen Svintsov, following the example set by the serfs of the neighboring estate of Brasovo, which belonged to Stepan Stepanovich Apraksin, Golitsyna's cousin and son-in-law. The ensuing insurrection, which spread throughout the area, became the most significant peasant unrest since the Pugachev uprising of 1773–75, involving about thirteen thousand serfs. The Radogoshch' serfs hastily put together a popular court and sentenced their bailiff Svintsov and seven other figures to death. A first confrontation between serfs and official forces resulted in five deaths among the serfs at Radogoshch' and two on the government's side. On February 13, after several attempts to persuade the serfs to put their arms down peacefully, the insurgents were finally overcome by a full-fledged military assault on Brasovo, led by Nikolai Repnin, the distinguished field-marshal and well-known freemason. Thirty-four Brasovo serfs were killed during the onslaught, and Golitsyna's mansion burned down in the attack on Radogoshch'. Fierce state repression followed: sixteen leaders of the insurrection were condemned to one hundred lashes with the knout and a life sentence of hard labor in Siberia. Many more received lesser sentences.⁴²

At some point before January 23, Golitsyna's serfs had addressed a petition to Paul I, asking to be transferred to the status of state peasants. In justification, they detailed a catalogue of complaints against Svintsov, who over more than twenty years had reduced them to "destitution and oppression." Their main complaint was about their work on the extensive distilleries, which produced more than 1.2 million liters per year of vodka. The distilleries required the work of 330 men and operated throughout the year, even at the peak of field work. The serfs pointed out that less than half of the vodka production was delivered to the state, while the rest was illegally sold to local taverns. Serfs were also responsible for all transportation related to the distilleries, as well as to the enormous stone construction undertaken on the estate. In the famine years of 1787 and 1788, while Golitsyna was socializing in Paris, Svintsov confiscated all their reserves of grain in order to keep the distilleries running, giving serfs the distillery waste for their survival. Svintsov also increased the size of the lord's land at the expense of the serfs' own plots. The end result of this systematic abuse and exploitation was that the serf population of Radogoshch' had diminished by more than half since the 1730s, a loss which, as they put it, "came from no other reason than the ceaseless day and night work." They also noted that fifty men had died in the cauldrons of the distilleries. It is clear, if one is to believe the serfs, that Golitsyna's lifestyle in Europe and subsequently at court was financed by the brisk exploitation of her serfs, who provided free labor in her distilleries.⁴³

⁴¹A. Trubnikov, "Kniaginia Golitsyna v Mar'ine i Gorodne," *Starye gody* (July–September 1910): 164–65. In the 1820s she commissioned an album of lithographs with views of the mansion and gardens, suggesting the pride she took in her residence. See [S. P. Lukin], *Sobranie vidov sela Gorodni i ego okrestnostei v semi verstakh ot Kalugi* (N.p., N.d.), available at <http://www.raruss.ru/russian-manors/701-lukin-gorodnya.html>.

⁴²The story of the insurrection is retold in E. P. Trifil'ev, *Ocherki iz istorii krepostnogo prava v Rossii. Tsarstvovanie imp. Pavla Pervogo* (Khar'kov, 1904), 31–55. Documents relating to it are in S. N. Valk, ed., *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 1796–1825 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1961), 107–39.

⁴³Valk, *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii*, 107–9.

There is little reason to cast doubt on the serfs' account. Their protest was directed specifically at their treatment and they made it repeatedly clear that they remained faithful to the tsar, in whose authority they placed all their hopes. Their petitions were written by the parish priest Iakov Koloshin, who signed on behalf of the illiterate serfs.⁴⁴ The local priest's endorsement and assistance must have irked Paul I, as in the manifesto he promulgated in response to the uprising, one reads that "church officials, in particular parish priests, have the obligation to warn their parishioners against false and harmful declarations."⁴⁵ Nevertheless, even Paul took the complaints seriously and ordered that Golitsyna and Apraksin be instructed to root out the abuse by their estate managers.⁴⁶ Finally, the historian E. P. Trifil'ev quoted official data from a report by the Orlov governor that corroborate the figures given by the serfs about the production of the distilleries and the manpower required to run them.⁴⁷

The extant archive gives little indication of Golitsyna's response to the uprising. The family wizened up only slowly to the extent of the destruction and seemed to consider the mutiny as an unprovoked calamity. They were most affected by the death of Svintsov, whom Ekaterina, Golitsyna's daughter, called her mother's "true friend."⁴⁸ A new bailiff was appointed for Radogoshch', but the mansion was never reconstructed, suggesting that Golitsyna did not intend to return to the estate. Her appetite for agronomical improvement and for financial profit went on unabated, and she continued to make a handsome living from the sale of alcohol. At best, we can say that she turned a blind eye to the ruthless exploitation of her serfs; at worst that she actively abetted her bailiff. In short, between the well-meaning economist keen to observe the treatment of peasants and serfs in various countries of Europe and the callous estate manager, we end up with a blatant contradiction.

BORN IN 1772, I. I. Bariatskii belonged to the upper echelon of the Russian elite and received a Europeanized education characteristic of the young men of his social standing. His mother, Princess Ekaterina von Holstein-Beck, descended from the ducal family of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Beck, her father having been the governor of Estonia. Bariatskii's own father, Prince Ivan Sergeevich Bariatskii, the descendant of a Chernigov princely family, was Russian ambassador at the court of Louis XVI between 1774 and 1786. Bariatskii left Russia in July 1789 with his mother, who embarked on a trip to seek a cure for her rheumatism. While she continued her journey, he stayed in Leipzig to study at the university, before traveling to Geneva, where he was to continue his studies between late 1790 and 1792, possibly stopping in revolutionary Paris on the way.⁴⁹ From Geneva he also traveled to Italy, where his mother was spending much of her time, engrossed primarily

⁴⁴Ibid., 123.

⁴⁵*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii (PSZ)*, Pervoe sobranie, 45 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830), vol. 24, no. 17769 (January 29, 1797), 305–6.

⁴⁶Trifil'ev, *Ocherki*, 39.

⁴⁷Ibid., 55.

⁴⁸RGB, f. 64, karton 86, d. 8, l. 10ob.

⁴⁹In Leipzig, Bariatskii attended the lectures of Ernst Platner, an eclectic and charismatic scholar who also drew the attention of Radishchev and Karamzin. It is not clear what he studied in Geneva.

in beholding art and visiting artists' studio.⁵⁰ We know about Bariatsinskii's political views and interests from a thick notebook he kept in the years 1790–92 and which he entitled "The Writings of Prince Ivan Ivanovich Bariatsinskii."⁵¹ He embraced the French Revolution and placed himself among the admirers and supporters of Mirabeau, describing a debate at the National Assembly. While in Geneva, itself in the throes of revolutionary fervor, he wrote a scathing description of the political situation in the *Cité de Calvin* entitled "Coup d'oeil at Geneva," aiming his ire in particular at the local aristocracy, which in his view had usurped all power in the republic.⁵² He blames the elite for pursuing its self-interest and undermining republican institutions. It is clear from his writings that Bariatsinskii conceived of aristocratic privilege as entailing a responsibility to act in the defense and furtherance of the common good, and it is this core principle that he sees contravened in the deportment of the Genevan oligarchy. His notebook shows him keenly interested in political matters, in the unfolding of the Revolution, and in legal definitions of freedom, advocating views that reveal the influence of German natural law.⁵³ At the same time, in line with physiocratic thinking, he professed economic views that make the land the unique source of wealth of a nation, writing in an entry called "On the True Wealth of Nations"—possibly a dig at Adam Smith—that "the land is the unique source of all riches. ... All the rest is notional, of pure convention, and has no intrinsic value and no other use than to serve as representation of the effective values." Not only does paper or fictive wealth amount to "sterile consumption," but it can destroy agricultural production and "exhaust society." For noblemen, credit is nothing but the "tomb of property."⁵⁴ Further in the notebook, he drafts the plan of a book on Russia's economic resources, which contains lofty expectations about its future contribution to Europe. He calls Russia "a second Europe" (he probably has in mind considerations of size) and intends to emphasize "the important role his country has always played." Russia, to him, "possesses everything which can facilitate the progress of commerce," and the main task is to foster agriculture, "which has always been considered as the principal and true source of Russia's treasures."⁵⁵ He thinks that Russia merely needs population growth and better communications, notably by "developing waterways to facilitate commercial exchanges."⁵⁶ It is clear from these writings that, despite his interest in natural law and in republican government, he identified himself as a Russian patriot and was keen to emphasize Russia's political and economic might.

⁵⁰See her interesting travel diary, Bariatsinskaiia Ekaterina Petrovna, ur. Golshtein-Bek, *Zapiski o puteshestvii po Evrope*, RGB, f. 19, op. 5/2, d. 12.

⁵¹I. I. Bariatsinskii, *Ecrits du Prince Ivan Ivanowitch Bariatsinsky*, Chernoviki, zapiski, zametki, rassuzhdeniia I. I. Bariatsinskogo, RGB, f. 19, op. 2, papka 253, d. 1.

⁵²For Bariatsinskii's views on Geneva and his approach to natural law, along with a publication of this text, see my "Aristocratic Subjectivity in Revolutionary Turmoil: I. I. Bariatsinskii's 'Coup d'oeil sur Genève' (1791)," *Cahiers du monde russe* 57:4 (2017): 1–31.

⁵³Bariatsinskii's notebook contains a twenty-page inset, "Droit naturel: Système de Mr Platner," which appears to represent his lecture notes from Leipzig (RGB, f. 19, op. 2, papka 253, d. 1, ll. 13–33).

⁵⁴Bariatsinskii, *Sur la vraie richesse des nations*, *ibid.*, l. 59.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, ll. 84ob.–85.

⁵⁶After inheriting the estate of Ivanovskoe (Mar'ino), Bariatsinskii tried to open up the local river for navigation and transportation and was incensed by the resistance put up by his neighbors. One has to "follow common, not private, interest, as is customary here," he wrote angrily to his chargé d'affaires (and former minister of finances) F. A. Golubtsov (RGB, f. 19, op. 1, papka 154, l. 30).

In late 1792, Bariatinskii prepared a notebook entitled “Recollections of Italy and Geneva, Year 1792.” This volume features a clean copy of his “Coup d’oeil at Geneva,” as well as a longer text entitled “Reflections on Italy,” which runs to about thirty pages and contains two drawings of street scenes.⁵⁷ This text, written in French, provides a sharply critical view of the contemporary political, economic, legal, and moral condition of Italy. It takes up a broad series of issues, ranging from the corruption of criminal jurisprudence to the power of religion, from the pernicious influence of charity to the survival of a few ancient Roman virtues among the people. Bariatinskii starts his analysis by detailing the pernicious effects of the dismemberment of Italy into small principalities, which stifles its national identity. He speaks of a “feudal anarchy” in which aristocrats compete among themselves to attract clients to their little despotic dominion, notably by providing safe harbor to criminals and by maintaining an army of beggars. As a result, justice becomes venal, so that murders are considered routine and trivial offenses. Even the *sbirri*, who should protect the public order, engage in their own criminal dealings, often in collusion with aristocrats. Bariatinskii does not mince his words about the result of this moral and legal degradation: Italians are “the most villainous people on earth.”⁵⁸

Another aspect of the Italians’ debasement is the influence of religion, and here Bariatinskii’s critique rejoins Golitsyna’s views on Catholicism. The survival of superstitions and the commanding power of the Pope mean that legitimate political actions, such as rebellion on account of price rises for staples, are easily stamped out. Bariatinskii writes of the “despotic power which religion exercises over the spirit of the nation.” Religion also encourages charity, idleness, and lack of productivity, while hindering population growth. Enormous waste of resources results from the fact that “priests, murderers, prostitutes and beggars, these are three quarters of the population.”⁵⁹

The moral degradation of Italians, which undermines the political economy of the country, is attributable to a “monstrous inequality in the distribution of wealth” in the country, which creates only “discouragement, laziness, sterile envy, and crime.” The numerous beggars who are maintained by wealthy princes encourage sloth and destroy manufacturing, as they “earn” as much as an artisan, albeit with less effort, which deflects manpower from industry. If there is no happiness in Italy (the happiness of the people being a government’s highest badge of legitimacy according to German natural law), it is ultimately because there is no “individual security” in the absence of a functioning and fair legal system.⁶⁰

Bariatinskii is highly critical of the state of agriculture, which is “entirely neglected in Italy.” While nature is so fertile that it feeds Italians despite their indolence, Italy would be among Europe’s most formidable nations were its agriculture equal to the fertility of its climate. The Pope is particularly remiss in failing “to govern the political economy of his state as he governs the spirit of his subjects.” Due to the “languishing population, multitude

⁵⁷I. I. Bariatinskii, *Souvenirs d’Italie et de Genève, année 1792* (incorporating “Coup d’oeil sur Genève” and “Relfexions sur l’Italie”), Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, Otdel pis'mennykh istochnikov, f. 342, op. 1, d. 202.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, I. 12ob.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, II. 15ob. and 8ob., respectively.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, II. 27–27ob.

of church persons, the monopoly of wheat and the Roman cult, which takes too much time away from work,” he extracts from his domains less than half their potential yield.⁶¹ In Sicily, despite the extraordinary fertility of the climate, agricultural productivity, discouraged by heavy taxes on exports, is so low that the population has declined in comparison with Roman times. Three quarters of the population do not work at all, as in Sicily there are 368 noble families and 80,000 churchmen. And trade in Italy is also hampered, notably by state monopolies on the sale of basic staples and by insane taxation, for example the bread tax, which in many cities is determined by committees of nobles.⁶²

Bariatinskii’s attacks on state monopolies and on fiscal interference in trade align him with the Physiocrats’ idea of “laissez-faire.”⁶³ His concern for massively unproductive government activities, notably in ecclesiastical lands, makes him likewise compatible with Adam Smith in his emphasis on productivity as the main factor of economic development. And in linking greater efficiency with population growth, Bariatinskii encapsulates the two main engines of wealth creation in Smith. Nevertheless, it is not certain that Bariatinskii is influenced by *The Wealth of Nations*. His concern is primarily with agriculture, and his apodictic mantra that “agriculture is the true wealth of nations, in front of which all others are artificial and impermanent,” makes him a committed physiocrat and contradicts Smith.⁶⁴ He has little to say about such key Smithian concepts as the division of labor, mechanization, the importance of capital, the value added from manufacturing, and so on. Nor does Bariatinskii speak the language of self-interest explicitly. As we saw briefly in his analysis of the demise of the Geneva republic, Bariatinskii espouses the rhetoric of public duty, rather than private interest. He is, however, in agreement with Smith when he describes at length how the absence of a fair administration of justice, which robs individuals of the security of their bodies and possessions, saps the wealth of the nation.⁶⁵ And he also echoes Smith when he calls on nobles to invest in public works in their lands, for example by creating irrigation systems.⁶⁶ Ultimately, his analysis of the travails of Italian principalities amounts to an extension of his critique of the aristocracy as an estate, which he had already adumbrated in his “Coup d’oeil at Geneva.” It is the self-serving despotic excesses of the rulers of Italian principalities, whose rule “can be compared to a Turkish government,” that have dismembered the collective body of the nation.⁶⁷

To what extent does this critique of the “feudal anarchy” created by “the excessive authority of nobles” also serve as a foil to reflect on the legitimacy of the Russian nobility? Bariatinskii was equally savage in his disdain of the Russian aristocracy: “The character of Russians is fake. Intrigue is their element. Low and groveling, proud and haughty, true chameleons, they are capable of anything and suitable to nothing. Russians all resemble

⁶¹Ibid., II. 32–34.

⁶²Ibid., II. 36ob.–37.

⁶³My analysis here focuses on the economic principles underpinning Bariatinskii’s description of Italy, rather than on the sources for his comments on Italian affairs, which is a separate topic that cannot be addressed here for lack of space.

⁶⁴Bariatinskii, *Souvenirs d’Italie*, I. 32.

⁶⁵Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Indianapolis, 1981), 663–88.

⁶⁶Bariatinskii, *Souvenirs d’Italie*, II. 32–33ob.

⁶⁷Ibid., I. 8.

one another, not because they have a national character, but because they all imitate.”⁶⁸ Following his European studies, Bariatinskii embarked on a career in the diplomatic service, which to be sure involved a lot of “imitation.” However, in 1812, as he inherited his parents’ estates upon their death, he promptly retired from civil service and began stylizing himself as an agronomist, attempting to improve agriculture on his estate of Mar’ino in Kursk province.⁶⁹ More importantly, he built an opulent mansion and stately gardens, which pushed him into serious debt and took a severe toll on his serfs.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, as he received reports of their destitution, he sought ways to alleviate their lot, distributing grain, horses, and sheep.⁷¹ Agricultural improvement, to him, meant primarily the introduction of new seeds, techniques, and machines. Although he received a medal from the Free Economic Society for his efforts in draining marshes, he was unsuccessful in changing the traditional system of field rotation. In stark contradiction with his physiocratic convictions, he never questioned the basic institutions underpinning Russian agriculture, notably serfdom and in particular the *corvée*, which he deemed indispensable to reforming the moral character of Russian serfs.

Bariatinskii was as concerned to affirm his social eminence as he was to improve the life of those in his care. Indeed, he hoped that his pursuit of agricultural productivity would enable him both to enhance his prestige and to better the lot of his serfs. He argued that agricultural reform was more valuable a service to the state than careers in St. Petersburg, and in his views on the centrality of agriculture to the nation and on the pernicious nature of debt, he remained a physiocrat in thought, if not in deed. By the end of his life he confessed to his son in his will that he was ashamed of his debts and of the excessive luxury he had indulged in designing his estate life. He found in agricultural improvement a discourse that accommodated the revolutionary zeal of his youth, while also allowing his pursuit of aristocratic distinction. But it is not clear that the path he cut out in life was so fundamentally different from that of an Italian duke, at least in the sense that he did little to diminish disparities in the distribution of wealth on his estate or to give security of body and property to his serfs. The republican ideas he absorbed in his youth, which emphasized patriotic commitment to the common good, rephrased as patriarchal care for his serfs, prevented him from recognizing or accepting the liberal linkage between self-interest and industriousness. Increasingly, he resorted to coercive means of control, threatening to punish

⁶⁸Bariatinskii, *Ecrits*, I. 101. This passage is clearly inspired by Rousseau’s critique of Petrine Westernization in the *Contrat Social* (bk. 2, chap. 8). Bariatinskii subsequently also refers to Raynal’s treatment of Russia in his *Histoire philosophique et politique*. This passage and its continuation evidently refer to the Westernized nobility.

⁶⁹It is worth noting that as he developed an interest for agronomy in 1812, Bariatinskii wrote first to Charles Pictet de Rochemont in Geneva and then corresponded with other famous European agricultural improvers. He joined the Free Economic Society only in 1819, when he settled on his estate. While estate reconstruction took place, that is between 1812 and 1819, he stayed in Germany and there is no evidence that he read Russian agronomical or economic literature.

⁷⁰A detailed analysis of Bariatinskii’s estate transformation and agricultural reforms can be found in my “Self-fashioning, Agricultural Improvement, and Enlightenment Practice: I. I. Bariatinskii’s Reforms of the Country Estate,” in *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762–1825: Public Role and Subjective Self*, ed. Andreas Schönle et al. (DeKalb, 2016), 136–54.

⁷¹Although the peasants were complaining, there is no evidence in the archive that they went so far as to rebel.

lazy or wayward serfs with work on the pond dig or in his factories.⁷² Thus republican rhetoric of patriotic commitment turned into a legitimization of a paternalistic and authoritarian exercise of power, contradicting the premise of laissez-faire at the heart of both physiocratic and Smithian economics.

A. M. BAKUNIN, born 1768, the father of the anarchist, was a nobleman of ancient middling stock. He received a thorough education, most of it in Italy, where he was sent at the age of nine.⁷³ In 1783 he started working as a clerk and then translator for the College of Foreign Affairs, while continuing his studies of natural history and, in 1789, defending a doctoral dissertation written in Latin at the University of Padua. With his knowledge of foreign languages he was destined for a brilliant career in the diplomatic service, but in 1791, at his mother's request, he retired from service with the rank of court councilor—the seventh on the Table of Ranks—to assume the management of the family estate at Priamukhino in Tver' province and redress the family finances.⁷⁴ Bakunin wrote poetry, letters, diaries, economic blueprints, as well as legal contracts, thus leaving behind a rich archive.

In a short text written around 1808 under the title of “Thoughts on the Beginning and Well-Being of Societies,” Bakunin developed his version of the stadial history of humankind then current among Scottish Enlighteners and French Physiocrats. This historical metanarrative provides a teleological account of human perfectibility, which unfolds through four stages of development—hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce—causally leading from one to the next. The text starts with the premise that human beings are naturally sociable, thus opposing both Rousseau and Hobbes. Family is the original social formation. As population grows, hunting stops being a reliable means of survival, so humans are compelled to domesticate animals. At this stage, to defend their cattle, they discover the need for property and also for assembling within larger groupings for the purpose of self-defense, leading to the emergence of personal property and some form of social organization. The rise of agriculture, the third stage, responds to the growing scarcity of available land and the need to find more intense forms of land use. Here ownership of land takes hold. And finally, the stage of commerce dawns when agriculture produces a surplus. At each stage of this materialist history, Bakunin highlights the institutional and moral consequences attendant on economic development. Thus with the rise of agriculture we witness the development of morality: “peaceful but steady pleasures take the place of violent and short-lived passions; plunder became a crime, noble inclinations arose; the strength of family, friendship, and love transformed the love for personal independence into collective love for the fatherland.”⁷⁵ Stadial history is crucial to Bakunin's political economy, not only because it underpins his deterministic premise that institutional factors shape the moral

⁷²RGB, f. 19, op. 1, papka 231, ed. khr. y, l. 8.

⁷³Randolph, *House in the Garden*, 48–81. See also Vladimir Sysoev, *Bakuniny* (Tver', 2002); and A. A. Kornilov, *Molodye gody M. Bakunina: Iz istorii russkogo romantizma* (Moscow, 1915).

⁷⁴In 1792 the Bakunin family's debt amounted to 53,000 rubles (Institut russkoi literatury [IRLI], f. 16, op. 4, d. 37, l. 2). By 1804, the family still owed 36,000 rubles, and 685 out of their 837 serfs were pledged as collateral on the debt (Sysoev, *Bakuniny*, 71).

⁷⁵A. M. Bakunin, “Mysli o nachale i blagosostoianii obshchestva,” *Tetradi s zapisami Bakunina*, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 825, op. 1, d. 259, l. 59ob.

profile of human beings, but also because it delineates a narrative of civilizational progress, within which he inscribes his own efforts. His conviction is that institutional changes lead to moral improvements and thus that agricultural reform can be a form of moral engineering.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly where Bakunin might have obtained these ideas. His views come closest to Adam Smith's philosophy, although in the *Wealth of Nations* stadial history is assumed but not treated systematically. A more complete exposition could be found in Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, which were, however, not available to Bakunin.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, there are other traces of possible Smithian influence in his writings, either directly or indirectly: in a text we will analyze more closely below, for example, he calls for freeing international grain trade and maintains that "the price of bread is a valuation of labor," both ideas central to the *Wealth of Nations*, the latter being distinctly Smithian.⁷⁷ Other versions of stadial history that Bakunin might have read (A. R. J. Turgot, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Condorcet) delineate different evolutionary narratives.⁷⁸

Bakunin's deterministic view of the stages of history leads to an emphasis on institutional change as the precondition for civilizational progress. In a letter to A. N. Olenin of 1803 he argues pragmatically that it is not ideas that bring enlightenment, but structural transformations. His main point is that enlightenment is not measured by the spread of knowledge and science, but by the well-being of the people, polemicizing with Karamzin, who at the time was promoting popular education in the pages of *Vestnik Evropy*.⁷⁹ New ideas hardly help destitute people, nor does knowledge in itself strengthen reason and moral character.⁸⁰ Even Fenelon's much-admired *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses* (1699) is powerless to influence human behavior, as it assumes disinterestedness, which does not exist in nature.⁸¹ In a six-point plan Bakunin highlights issues such as reforms of the legal system to protect justice from slander; changes to religious practice to distinguish truth from superstition and morality from kowtowing (*poklony*); sowing the seeds of industriousness to transform "the fetid currents of state and national prosperity into clean and inexhaustible springs"; the promulgation of clear laws to "differentiate between property and seizure, between rights and violence"; the revival of science, the arts, commerce, and

⁷⁶Desnitsii delivered a lecture in 1781, published soon after, which discussed property in the four stages of development. His lecture is available in S. A. Pokrovskii, ed., *Iuridicheskie proizvedeniia progressivnykh russkikh myslitelei* (Moscow, 1959), 242–58. It is only superficially similar to Bakunin's theory. On the rise of stadial theory see Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, England, 1976). For a discussion of the chronological appearance of various instances of stadial history see Ronald L. Meek, "Smith, Turgot, and the 'Four Stages' Theory," *History of Political Economy* 3:1 (1971): 9–27.

⁷⁷A. M. Bakunin, "Usloviia pomeschchika s krest'ianinom," in L. G. Agamalian, "A. M. Bakunin i ego proekt 'Uslovie pomeschchika s krest'ianinom,'" in *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia. Pis'mennost'. Iskusstvo. Arkheologiya*. 1998 (Moscow, 1999), 64.

⁷⁸The catalogue of Bakunin's library (established after 1842) has only two foreign works on agronomy and economy, namely an essay on crop rotation by the Genevan Pictet de Rochemont (a topic of great interest to Bakunin) and *Il Piantatore* by Ignazio Ronconi. The list of Russian-language works is no more illuminating, except that it includes the Russian translation of Hirzel's *The Rural Socrates*, which, however, is diametrically opposed to Bakunin's philosophy (IRLI, f. 16, op. 6, d. 36).

⁷⁹Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, Otdel rukopisei (RNB), f. 542, op. 1, d. 168, l. 2. For a brief discussion of this letter see L. G. Agamalian, "A. M. Bakunin: Vozvrashchenie v Rossiiu," http://anthropology.ru/ru/texts/agamalyan/ruseur_26.html.

⁸⁰RNB, f. 542, op. 1, d. 168, l. 4.

⁸¹Ibid., l. 5.

popular industry; and, finally, rules to clarify the respective rights and responsibilities of the rulers and the ruled, in order, and this is the critical phrase, “to create man” (*sotvorit' cheloveka*).⁸² To him the Enlightenment means not a body of thought, but a set of structural improvements, mostly by way of legal and economic reforms, that create a law-based society and guarantee the security of individuals and their property and thereby shore up the humanity of humans, or, in other words, enable their moral autonomy and personal initiative.

In keeping with these views, Bakunin explored ways serfdom could be reformed. In 1802 he prepared the project of a contract between landowner and serfs, which he sent for consultation to Olenin, who was then state secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁸³ The project was never returned to its author and, in any case, stood no chance of seeing implementation. The contract is written on behalf of a notional landowner called Ivan Dobrokhoto (Ivan Well-Wisher) and a serf named Miron, suggesting that it belongs more to the genre of didactic literature (where such names are common), than revealing Bakunin's actual legal intentions.⁸⁴ In it Bakunin carefully explains the benefits of each provision for the landowner, the agriculturalist (*zemledelets*), and society, as well as establishes its conformity with the law, taking Catherine's 1767 *Nakaz* as legal basis (even though it had no force of law). The primary idea of this project is the consolidation of land into plots of fifteen *desiatina* (roughly forty acres), to which each serf head of household would be given hereditary title in exchange for discharging a certain number of obligations, such as ceding to the landlord a third of the proceeds of the land, as well as planting potatoes, hedges, orchards, and keeping bees. For the landowner, granting property to serfs will bring the benefit of vouchsafing his own much larger property and increasing his revenue.⁸⁵ For the serfs, the benefit of owning property lies in the opportunity to make long-term improvements to the land and enhance its yield, acting on their natural self-interest: “Can one be a good peasant, if one does not know what is one's own? The harvest depends on industry, and industry on inviolability.” For society, the benefit is also a better management of the soil: “Just like dissolute women rarely have children, so the soil, moving from hand to hand, remains barren. In our economy, we have retained the spirit of nomadic peoples.”⁸⁶ In later notes to his contract, Bakunin argues that as they receive property rights, serfs will develop a completely transformed moral make-up. If his current *muzhiki* are in the habit of pilfering at the first opportunity, in the future, he maintains, “we won't have *muzhiki*, but *zemledel'tsy* who will embellish their property and as they take care of their own land, will begin to respect the property of others.”⁸⁷ In the initial version, Bakunin puts it more conceptually: “By acquiring means toward a comfortable subsistence, the knowledge of his obligations, and confidence that there won't be any new impositions, [the agriculturalist] at

⁸²Ibid., II. 9–10.

⁸³Bakunin, “Usloviia pomeschchika,” 63–71. In 1810, having never received his contract back, Bakunin copied a somewhat different version in his notebook, suggesting that he still cared for it (GARF, f. 825, op. 1, d. 259, II. 49ob.–55).

⁸⁴Randolph offers a more detailed discussion of the contract than can be accommodated here (*House in the Garden*, 73–79).

⁸⁵Perhaps Bakunin hints here at the landowners' perennial fear of peasant mutiny (“Usloviia pomeschchika,” 63).

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷GARF, f. 825, op. 1, d. 259, I. 52ob.

the same time acquires humanity and citizenship.”⁸⁸ In other words, in keeping with his stadial history, Bakunin charts the transformation from a nomadic mindset to that of settled, hard-working, law-abiding citizenship, a transformation that also brings aesthetic benefits. Serfs would in effect progress to the next historical stage.

Bakunin’s contract also envisions fundamental changes in the master’s relationship with his serfs. The master commits not to sell serfs, nor to interfere with their marriage, although in a paternalistic way he reserves the right to prevent forced marriages as well as marriages between people of dissimilar age. He will not require marriage prior to age eighteen, though will demand financial compensation for loss of earning if young people do not marry after that age. Crucially, Bakunin stops short of liberating the serfs fully; indeed, there are onerous provisions should a serf want to purchase his emancipation.⁸⁹ He merely seeks to grant serfs a degree of economic and moral autonomy, in order to generate at once greater efficiency, prosperity, probity, and aesthetic amenity.

Bakunin prepared this contract precisely at the time when the Unofficial Committee and the Permanent Council were discussing a draft edict initiated by S. P. Rumiantsev on the emancipation of serfs.⁹⁰ It transpires from a crossed-out section of a letter from Olenin to an unknown official that this official had requested a copy of Bakunin’s contract.⁹¹ Olenin complied with the request, but demanded that in accordance with the author’s wishes this copy be not disseminated further. He also made profuse apologies for the “incorrect and at times daring style” of the author, which he attributed to the “enthusiasm, with which he saw future times and longed-for images of universal peace and prosperity.”⁹² It is thus clear that Bakunin shared this contract with Olenin mostly to solicit advice, but not (or at any rate not yet) to obtain official endorsement for his plan, and only reluctantly, if at all, to weigh in on the legislative process. And in fact, his intentions are fundamentally at variance with the ensuing Edict on Free Agriculturalists, which was promulgated on February 20, 1803. The edict combined the possibility of emancipating serfs (at their owners’ discretion, which was already legally permissible) with the conveyance of land property to them, at conditions that are agreed between the landowner and the serfs and approved by the tsar. The novelty of the edict was in creating a *de facto* new class of people, free farmers, who owned the land they tilled, although they remained tied to their former masters by certain conditions.⁹³

⁸⁸Bakunin, “Usloviia pomeshchika,” 65.

⁸⁹They have to compensate their master financially by an amount equivalent to his revenue, yet he would nevertheless retain the land (Bakunin, “Usloviia pomeshchika,” 70). Agamalian, who published this document, misunderstands Bakunin’s intentions when she states that it “presupposes the emancipation of serfs with land” (“A. M. Bakunin i ego proekt,” 58).

⁹⁰For an excellent analysis of debates about serfdom during the reign of Alexander I see Susan P. McCaffray, “Confronting Serfdom in the Age of Revolution: Projects for Serf Reform in the Time of Alexander I,” *Russian Review* 64 (January 2005): 1–21.

⁹¹RNB, f. 542, op. 1, d. 76, l. 1. Agamalian did not publish this crossed-out section, but it is important for an understanding of the circulation of Bakunin’s contract. It contradicts Agamalian’s thesis, tentatively endorsed by Randolph, that the “Uslovie” was intended by Bakunin to serve as a model for the edict under discussion (Randolph, *House in the Garden*, 71–74). Bakunin drew patriotic pride from imagining that he acted by setting an example, but he consistently rejected any official roles offered to him.

⁹²Agamalian, “A. M. Bakunin i ego proekt,” 72.

⁹³The most complete analysis of the outcome of this decree is still Semevskii, *Krest'ianskii vopros v Rossii*, 252–81.

Bakunin had no intention of emancipating his serfs. Instead, he merely wanted to confer ownership of the land to them, as a way to provide them with an incentive to develop habits of industriousness. Bakunin's project was incompatible with Russian law in that only free people were then entitled to own land.⁹⁴ It also contradicted agricultural practice in serf communes, where the rotation of land among families and the use of unfenced communal lands was the norm.⁹⁵ There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of his project in that on the one hand it envisioned property as the source of moral regeneration and autonomy, yet on the other it subjected serfs to a host of rather detailed impositions in perpetuity. It is thus not entirely surprising that it was never implemented.

This unexecuted contract of 1802 was not Bakunin's last word on the subject of economic reform. In 1813 he developed a new, more modest and realistic project, which envisioned giving serfs not only fields to cultivate on quit-rent, but also meadows for hay, so that they could keep their own cattle and thereby fertilize the fields entrusted to their care. Again the underlying intent was to give serfs more autonomy and to foster structures based on mutual self-interest: "In my view," Bakunin put it in his typical hard-nosed way, "only that economic system is good which harnesses the interest of the owner to that of the farmers."⁹⁶ Furthermore, mutual self-interest would lay the conditions for shared agricultural experiments such as the introduction of mills, cheese dairies, textile factories, and distilleries. Complicated calculations demonstrated that with the use of meadows, serfs could be expected to hand in a quarter of the yield to the landowner, rather than the customary fifth, and still be better off. Altogether, including the factories, Bakunin reckoned that he could fetch forty thousand rubles per year, while his peasants would receive eighty thousand.

Yet just as he reaches this hopeful conclusion comes the characteristic acknowledgment that this plan is nothing but a pipedream that will never come to pass:

Having read this, some will consider me insane, others will call me an idle planner. The more sensible will ask me why I do not implement my plan: 1) because in the first years one cannot expect great income as every beginning is difficult; 2) because I'm not the master; 3) because it is customary from old days that there are plenty of idle house serfs; 4) because peasants and those who work against their will toil as little and poorly as possible; 5) because there is no capital and there is no way to obtain any in the current order of things; 6) because etc. etc. etc.⁹⁷

Curiously, while concocting his detailed plans, Bakunin remained fully aware that his ideas would remain just that, as they ran against current economic, legal, social, and moral realities. How could he at the same time map out avenues of social and economic reform while harboring such pessimistic views about their implementation? Is Bakunin an early-day Oblomov?

⁹⁴However, his project is similar to the extra-legal agreements that were struck between owners and serfs on the Sheremetev estates (Dennison, *Institutional Framework*, 132–48).

⁹⁵Confino, *Systèmes agraires et progrès agricole*, 271–340.

⁹⁶IA. M. Bakunin, untitled project, IRLI, f. 16, op. 2, d. 7, l. 14.

⁹⁷Ibid., l. 22ob. Priamukhino belonged to Bakunin's mother until her death in 1814.

WHAT, THEN, was the effect of political economy on the identity and lifestyle of the three nobles we considered here? In all three instances, the promise of progressive reform inherent in their interest in political economy was defeated in practice, and spectacularly so in Golitsyna's case. Is this to say that political economy was no more than ideological window dressing? Or was it just a youthful fantasy? This would be overly reductive, even though all three became more conservative over the years. Their interest in political economy reflects an aspiration to live a mindful existence and to fashion their identity in ways that at once reflect their values, but also achieve social recognition. Golitsyna seems to have been the least animated by public concerns, but Bariatinskii and Bakunin clearly framed their thoughts and actions as a form of patriotic service, which they discharged primarily by setting an example of what they saw as enlightened estate management, although not so far as to harm their self-interest.

In reflecting on their position in economic language, they encountered both objective obstacles and subjective contradictions. Both Bariatinskii and Bakunin became self-critical, impatient at their own failures to live according to their better selves. The archival record for Golitsyna is slimmer and less definitive in this regard, although her imperious public manner in her later years suggests no lack of self-confidence. The least we could say about the impact of political economy is that it created both objective and subjective tensions as it exacerbated contradictions between patriotic aspirations, social norms, the pursuit of economic rationality, psychological longing for autonomy, and moral concern for serfs. None of my protagonists managed to reconcile their paternalistic and patriarchal identity as serf owners with the emerging notion that only self-interest and the security of property can truly incentivize productive economic behavior. Bakunin went the furthest in this regard, incorporating the transition from the nefarious habits of dependency to the self-governing virtues of economic independence into a narrative of stadial evolution, but the reform plans he carefully hatched in accordance with these ideas crashed against the realities of his own precarious finances and the legal parameters of his society.

Nevertheless, political economy encouraged behavior that was unconventional by the norms of the times. Golitsyna's determined pursuit of social prestige and economic profit served in part to compensate for the social ineptness of her husband and may have stretched gender conventions. She was also idiosyncratic in that she eschewed the habits of ostentatious consumption. According to contemporary accounts, the lifestyle she led in St. Petersburg upon her return was hardly luxurious and her receptions were frugal at best, which in no way hurt her social standing. In contrast, Bariatinskii felt it necessary to assume the trappings of luxury, although he was scathing about his social peers (whom he thought to impress with his display of wealth) and militant about serving his country in an unconventional capacity as agricultural "improver." To retire from service in 1812, just as Napoleon was readying to invade Russia, was highly unorthodox. Bakunin, too, declined several offers to hold public service, preferring to devote his energy to transforming his estate and creating a domestic idyll on the margins of society, but as a form of patriotic experiment.

It is perhaps testament to the gap between the worldview implicit in Western political economy and social and economic realities in Russia that of the three, it is only Golitsyna, the least committed to acting on its precepts, who was economically successful. Neither Bariatinskii nor Bakunin could quite overcome their indebtedness, despite their best

intentions. But at least they felt their debts to be a blot on their conscience, contradicting the received view of the upper nobility as a blithely improvident and profligate class.⁹⁸ In some instances, the impact of political economy trickled down to their descendants. Sofia Stroganova, Golitsyna's daughter, became herself a noted agricultural "improver" who inherited and successfully managed the vast Stroganov estates in Siberia, introducing a series of innovative institutions to protect the serfs and founding two agronomical schools.⁹⁹ And Mikhail Bakunin became the famous anarchist who put property ownership at the heart of his sociological analysis. While less than transformative, the early reception of political economy by the noble elite unsettled their subjective world, putting into motion a process that eventually led to a fundamental questioning of the moral aspects of property (and serf) ownership.

⁹⁸Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1961), 379–85.

⁹⁹*Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, 25 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1896–1918), 19:477–80.